

S. F. R. C.

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Remarks of Bruce Herschensohn
Former Director, Motion Picture and Television Service
UNITED STATES INFORMATION AGENCY

at the

WASHINGTON FILM COUNCIL
Barker Hall Dining Room
YWCA Building - 17th & K Streets

1 P.M., Wednesday, April 12, 1972

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A number of months ago, if someone was to have asked me if there was any single person within the United States who had the power to veto the will of the Senate and the House and the Executive Branch of government, I surely would have said "of course not."

The answer, however, would have been incorrect. The Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee has recently been able to intentionally accomplish that clear distortion of democracy.

Beyond that, to some it is unthinkable, unpardonable and irreverent to question the views or the judgments of the man who uses the privileged sanctuary of that chair for so much advancement of his own personal and unrepresentative point-of-view.

But during the past number of years I have heard loud opposition voiced, hearings conducted and investigations made of Supreme Court Appointees and officers of the Justice Department including the former Attorney General and the Acting Attorney General of the United States. No stone has been ~~UNTURNED~~ to question one of their previous decisions or points-of-view.

With the powers he holds so extraordinary, I think it worthy to periodically examine the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee:

-- A man who has not voted in favor of one major piece of civil rights legislation throughout the 1950's and 1960s.

- Who feels Israel should return to the Arab States the territories it gained during the six-day war.
- Who praises Ho Chi Minh and justifies Khrushchev setting missiles in Cuba during President Kennedy's administration.
- Who defends China's entrance into the Korean conflict against us.
- Who successfully blocked a Senate resolution co-sponsored by liberals, conservatives, Republicans and Democrats alike, commending the Sontag raiders in their attempt to free Prisoners-of-War within North Vietnam.
- Who defends so-called "wars of national liberation."
- Who is now attempting to kill the only access to free information for citizens of closed societies.
- Who is attempting to cripple the United States Information Agency and withhold its output from the review of United States citizens.

Should there be advice and consent given to the President for Presidential appointees? Of course. That is one of the great checks and balances of this government. But the man who sits in the most powerful legislative chair regarding this nation's foreign affairs should not be exempt from review.

It is my feeling that it is time for the American public to give its own advice and consent.

His power and his use of that power is staggering. Let us take, for example, the brief history of the coming extinction of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, which nothing short of an eleventh-hour appeal can save:

The House of Representatives passed a bill funding the two radio arms through Fiscal Year 1973. An overwhelming majority of the Senate signed a resolution co-sponsored by Senators Humphrey and Percy, advocating continuation of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty. With little, if any exception, the nation's major newspapers wholeheartedly voiced opposition to Senator Fulbright's plan to kill the two radio arms. Where does it stand today? They will die on June 30, 1972 because Senator Fulbright wants them to die--and as he said in February of this year "take their rightful place in the graveyard of cold-war relics."

Concurrent with those events, the Senator commissioned the Library of Congress to make a thorough study of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty and report back to him on its findings. However, when he discovered the completed Library of Congress reports praised the two radio arms, he disregarded the report. And that is where the matter stands.

Senator Fulbright explains his position by stating, "Is there any reason to insist upon continuing these activities which I believe to be fundamentally inconsistent with the purposes of the President?"

But is Senator Fulbright the judge of the purposes of the President, or is the President the judge of his purposes?

On March 11, 1972, the President made the following statement: "I am deeply concerned at the imminent prospect that Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty may be compelled to shut down. With the support of the American

government and people, these two unique voices of freedom have for many years been a vital source of uncensored news and commentary for tens of millions of people in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union... It would be a tragedy if their light should now be extinguished... "

In the mid-sixties I had the rare opportunity to interview over five-hundred refugees from communist nations across the entire Eurasian continent from the tip of Scandinavia in the west to the tip of Korea in the east. The most unanimous repeated praise, almost with a religious fervor and often with tears, was for the information received from those radio arms and the Voice of America. My experience was by no means unique. The outpouring of communications into the United States Information Agency within the last couple of months with world press reports, letters and telegrams regarding the shock and alarm at the probable extinction of the radio arms, has been mountainous. Last week, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, the Nobel Prize-winning dissident Russian literary giant voiced his praise for Radio Liberty. Saying, "if we learn anything about events in our own country, it's from Radio Liberty." When Senator Fulbright wanted to support his view against those radio arms on the floor of the Senate last March the Sixth, he was able to have in his possession only one letter of support from overseas -- and that one being from a retired American Foreign Service Officer whose name the Senator left anonymous.

Nevertheless, the Senator has, so far, been successful.

With that record behind him, Senator Fulbright for the first time held authorization hearings of the United States Information Agency prior to funding through the Appropriations Committees of the House and the Senate. The conclusions to which he will arrive are not yet known.

Now, I must separate fact from editorial prophecy. I believe -- and it's only a belief, that the Senator will attempt to cut the funds of the USIA. The logical question could well be posed: "Why not wait to see what the Senator does prescribe for the USIA rather than make a prejudgment based on what you have surmised at the hearings?"

It is my concern that once he records his judgment it will be too late for any affirmative action. If the work of the United States Information Agency is to be unhampered, it is my opinion that what ever public pressure which can be exerted, must be exerted now. Pressure for the continuation of Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe started coming in when it was already the eleventh hour. No one would have believed then that he would have acted against the majority of the Congress. Few would have known that he had the power to succeed.

There is one further catch in requesting public interest in the works of the USIA. While he attempts to pass judgment on the Agency, he is trying to insure that the taxpayer not be able to review the products of the Agency, and hence not be able to fairly review his judgment.

If Senator Fulbright believes the products of the USIA are not worth the taxpayer's money I should think he would be the first to have his decision

"The public's right to know" has been the phrase so often used by Senator Fulbright in regard to classified information which, once divulged, has involved the possible detriment of national security. Is it not, then, inconsistent that he wants to prohibit "the public's right to know" when it comes to unclassified material that does not involve national security?

Why am I so confident that if the public had continuing access to the material of the USIA, its budget would be maintained or increased? Because I have seen those products. Because I have been witness to some of their effects. Because I believe that the majority of this country would be proud of an Agency that receives so much abuse for itself and gives so much reward for this nation.

How many films of the United States Information Agency has Senator Fulbright seen? How many publications of the USIA has he read? How many hours has the Senator spent before a radio, listening to the Voice of America or, for that matter, Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe? How many Public Affairs Officers, Information Officers and Cultural Affairs Officers has he seen at work overseas? How many USIS facilities has he inspected? I suppose I'll never know. But it was apparent by his questioning at the hearings, he knows very little about the United States Information Agency. Even that would not be significant if he conducted the hearings in an effort to find out information.

But the style in which he conducted those hearings seemed to indicate his purpose was to state his own position and try to find any one piece of

information that would seem to substantiate his prejudices which he held prior to those hearings. The Senator seemed to have a preconceived idea that all communication from the United States government to peoples of other nations is wrong. Beyond cultural exchanges and libraries, the termination, or as a fall-back position, the lessening of all other channels, seems to be his position.

The diminution of the United States Information Agency would be a tragedy for many peoples of the world -- but most of all for the people of the United States. Through other sources, we can count on all our troubles and problems, our setbacks and faults to be told around the world with daily regularity. Friend and foe alike, find the ailments of America to be in seemingly endless supply and demand. The taxpayer of this country should have no fear that the world is kept ignorant of our faults through hundreds of sources.

There is only one real communications outlet of this government that has as its mission the task of putting hard news, which is the truth of abnormality -- into context with the broader story, which is the truth of normality.

The two, together form a more honest representation of the United States today than would be received by foreign citizens if they were witness only to our aberrations.

The balance provided by the United States Information Agency is by no means enough -- but it is something -- and the small amount it provides is well done.

The USIA has brought artistry and creativity into government. The marriage of policy content and quality has been made compatible by its Director, Mr. Frank Shakespeare. No longer is there sacrifice in one to make the other work. There has only been compromises of weaknesses to gain strengths and no longer the other way around.

We are in an era when artistry and communications are finally beginning to work in concert with the documents in attache cases of diplomats. Perhaps in a future time, the conflict of ideas will only be fought by creativity rather than destruction. The USIA is currently our most forward step in that direction.

Outside of the governments of closed societies, who are the voices who speak against the products of the United States Information Agency? By and large, those foreign citizens who oppose the United States.

Within this country, Republicans and Democrats, conservatives and liberals, communicators and artists who are familiar with its products are not divided on the work of the USIA.

But, unfortunately, its future may ultimately depend not on the judgment of the implementers of U. S. policy nor on communication experts nor on artists and creators, but instead on the perception of a single man -- Senator Fulbright. Will the American people have a knowledgeable voice in his decision? Not if he can prohibit that knowledgeable voice.

If future conflicts can be fought with ideas and communications rather than with guns and death, then civilization will have taken a giant step forward.

While communist nations have not simply maintained but have increased their international communications efforts on a continual basis, for us to unilaterally disarm in the dissemination of ideas, would be the most unforgivable surrender of all free men.

Senator Fulbright seems convinced the ideological conflict is over. I wish he was right. However, I don't recall the date the conflict ended. Was it the day the Berlin Wall came down? Was it the day guerrilla movements within Latin America were called back to Cuba? Was it the day North Vietnamese troops stopped crossing the demilitarized zone? Was it the day the borders between communist nations and its neighbors were freely opened? Or was it the day that the over one hundred radio arms from communist countries stopped international broadcasting of their propaganda?

None of that has happened. And so, though in Senator Fulbright's view the ideological conflict is over when he says it's over, the rest of us should, perhaps, wait for other signs.

We are a nation impatient for Utopia -- but impatience breeds errors.

With loud voices of self-condemnation rather than self-confidence, we have become perversely interested in flagelating ourselves and congratulating others. For over a decade, the advocates of that perversity have stood ready to flail the United States and its leaders for idealism and hard decisions. Simultaneously they have eagerly justified and defended the actions of closed societies, shrouded in their curtained-off "mystique." Those

messages were often applauded by those too young to know.

But lately more and more young people have caught on. They have started to travel. They have started to compare America -- not with a non-existent Utopia, as they did in the late 1960's -- but with the other nations of the world as they exist in the 1970's. And knowing that this nation has the greatest potential of reaching Utopia -- they are working for its arrival. All of this is true not because of the Fulbrights and other voices of masochism -- but in spite of them.

It is the proof that the continuing revolution which started two hundred years ago, will overcome future voices of masochism and will, in the long run, succeed.

Thank you.

Are there any questions?

TRANSMITTAL SLIP		DATE 12 April 1972
TO: [REDACTED]		
ROOM NO. 7 D 43	BUILDING Langley	
REMARKS: I thought you might be interested in the remarks of Bruce Herschensohn in what I believe is his formal reply to Sen. Fulbright. Copies have been sent to: Angus Thuermer [REDACTED]		
FROM: [REDACTED]		
ROOM NO.	BUILDING	EXTENSION 3618

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REPLACES FORM 36-8
WHICH MAY BE USED.

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